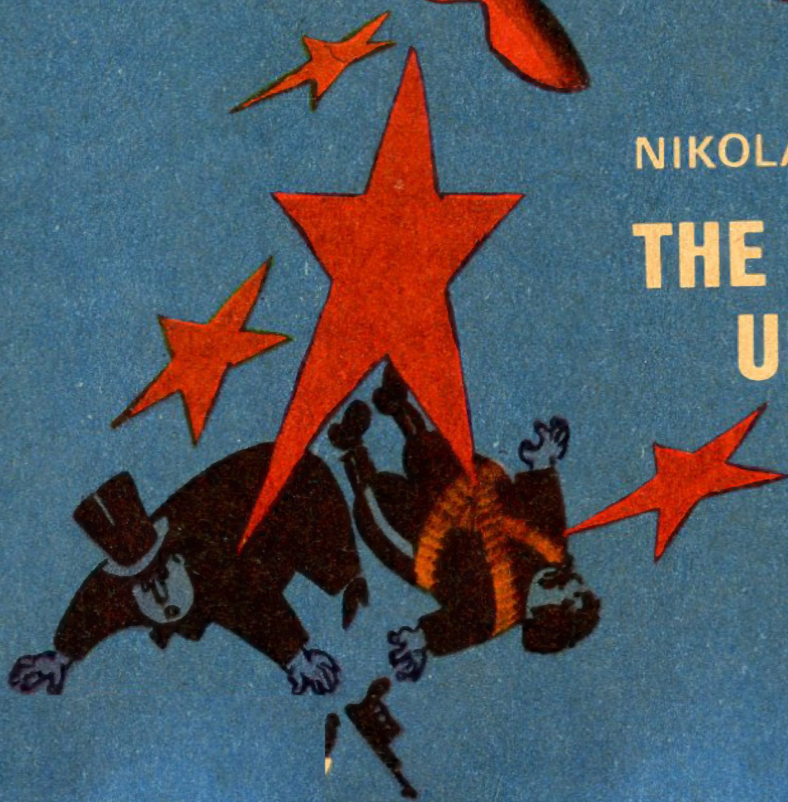




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# THE RIDER UP AHEAD

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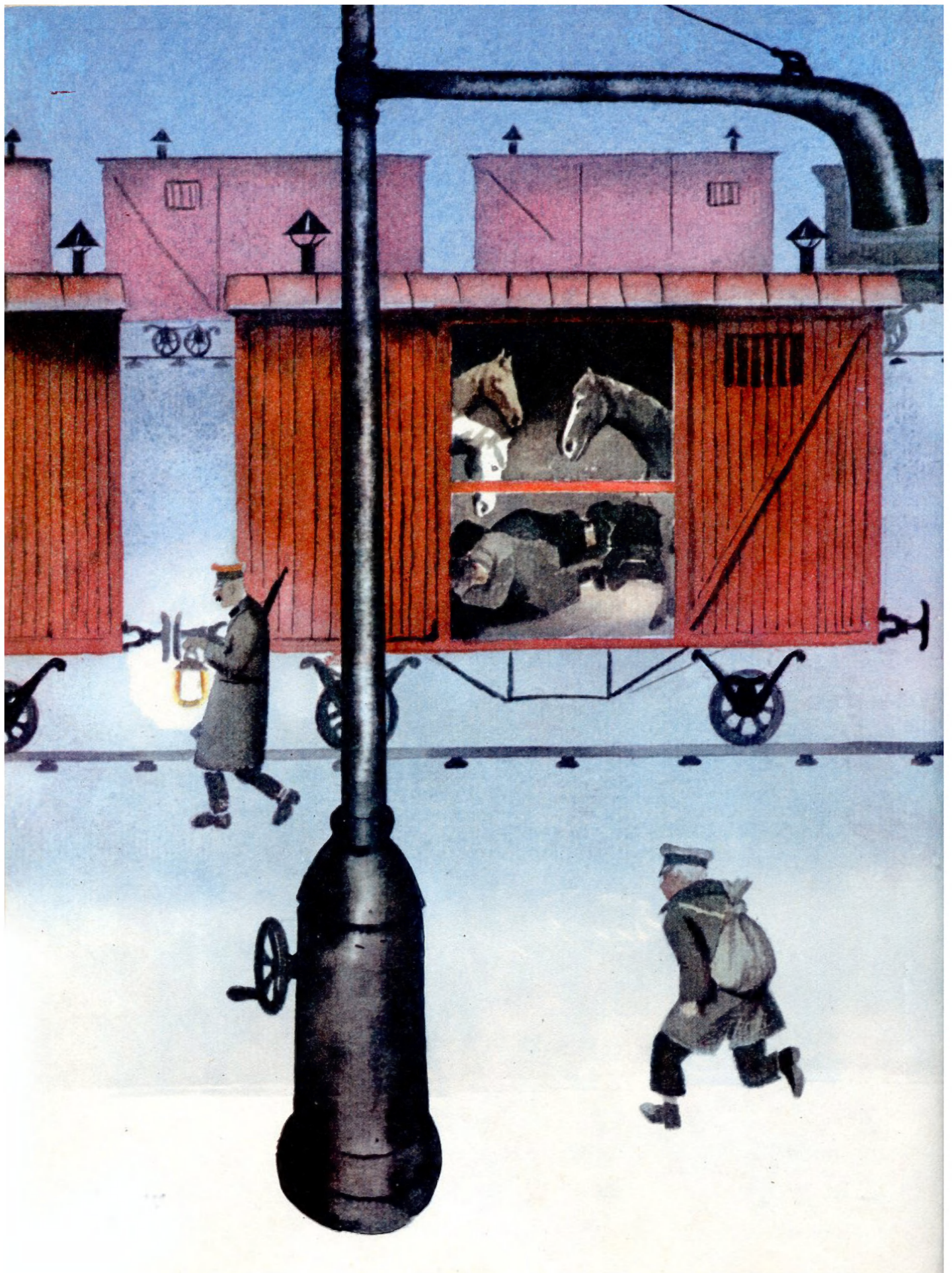


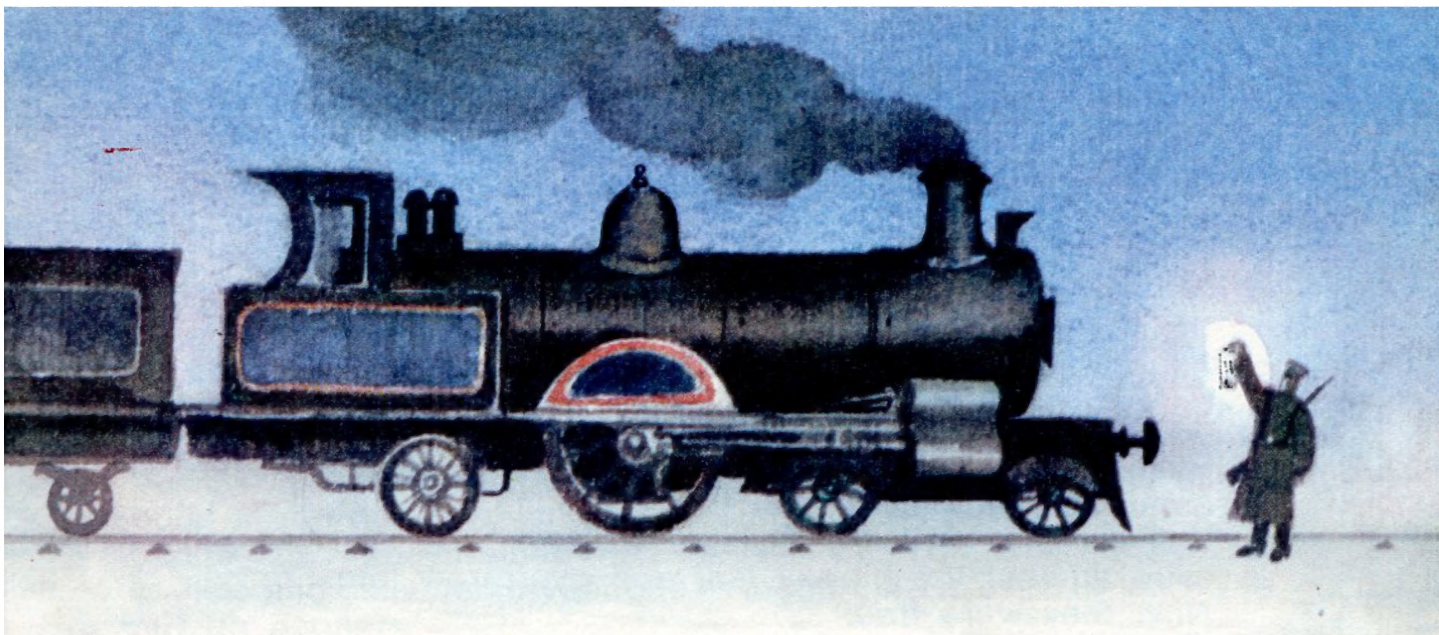
NIKOLAI BOGDANOV

# THE RIDER UP AHEAD

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## THE BOY WHO RAN OFF TO WAR

A boy named Arkady Golikov was born in the ancient Russian town of Arzamas. Like every other boy, he went to school, played ball and took part in the naval battles the boys staged on the local pond.

When World War I broke out, Arkady's father, Pyotr Golikov, whom he loved very much, was called up, as were the fathers of so many other girls and boys. One night Arkady dreamed that his father was wounded, that he had found him lying in a trench and had saved his life. That was when he decided to run away and join his father.

He dried cubes of bread to take along on his journey and saved his lunch money. Finally, one night he ran off to the railroad station, saw a troop train and climbed aboard. There were horses and sleeping soldiers in the car.

The whistle sounded, and the train began to move. They were on their way, pulling out of Arzamas. But they were not going to the front lines. The train was headed in the opposite direction, for these soldiers were going home on leave.

The runaway was brought back to his mother. His friends teased him, and his teacher said:

"Well, Arkady, I see you haven't been paying much attention to your geography lessons, since you set out in an eastwardly direction instead of a westwardly one. That's why you never got to where the war is."

It was a good thing he didn't, for that was an imperialist war, an unjust war fought by the Russian tsar and other monarchs

for new lands and new wealth. The rich became richer in this war, but the Russian and German workers and peasants suffered and died.

## **THE BOYS ARE ALL FOR THE REVOLUTION**

Russia was at war for three years. Many boys and girls in Arzamas lost their fathers in this war.

In February 1917 the Russian workers, soldiers and sailors rose up against the bloody tsar and overthrew him.

Now they were free.

The sleepy town of Arzamas suddenly came to life. There were meetings everywhere, and red flags, and red bows pinned to people's coats. It seemed like spring had come in the wintertime.



Arkady and his friends were all for the revolution.

However, the people's joy did not last long, because the bourgeoisie came to power. They wanted to continue the war, for it had made them all still richer. There was hunger in the country now.

Lenin's followers, the Communists, who were then called Bolsheviks, were not the only ones to fight for the people's happiness. They called upon the working people to take over power in the land and put an end to the war, so that they might build a new life in which there would be no more landowners or capitalists. Arkady helped them as best as he could. He handed out leaflets and delivered invitations to meetings. He drew posters and put up banners.

"DOWN WITH WAR!" "PEACE TO THE COTTAGES, WAR TO THE PALACES!" "LAND FOR THE PEASANTS, FACTORIES FOR THE WORKERS!" "ALL POWER TO THE SOVIETS!" These were the words on the banners.

It was a bitter, difficult struggle.

In October 1917 the people drove out the bourgeoisie. This was the Great October Socialist Revolution.

Vladimir Ilyich Lenin was the first leader of the world's first nation of workers and peasants. Lenin put an end to the war between Russia and Germany. Land that had belonged to the landowners was given to the peasants, and the factories and plants were handed over to the workers.

The merchants, landowners and the bourgeoisie could not accept this. They plotted revolts, fires and murders.

One evening, when Arkady was walking an elderly woman Communist home after a meeting, a bandit sent by the bourgeoisie to kill her attacked them. Arkady was fourteen years old at the time, but he did not become frightened. He shielded the woman, and the bandit's knife wounded him.

Soon after Arkady decided to join the Communist Party and to devote his life to defending the new Soviet Government.

The Communists of Arzamas were very fond of Arkady. He had proved his devotion to the Party and had shed his blood for it. The comrades held a meeting. They took his devotion to the revolutionary cause into consideration, and on August 28, 1918 they adopted the following decision: Arkady Golikov is to be accepted as a Party member with a consultative voice, considering his age, and until he becomes fully educated in the spirit of the Party."

Thus, he became a Communist at the age of 14.



## THE COMMANDER'S AIDE

Lenin, speaking on behalf of the world's first government of workers and peasants, called on all the peoples to live and work in peace. But the former tsarist generals and admirals set off at the head of the new Whiteguard armies to crush the Land of Soviets. The bourgeoisie of the world helped them by supplying them with troops, tanks, planes, guns and money.

The Civil War had begun.

The Red Army entered the struggle for freedom, although it had very few cannons, machine-guns and ammunition, and did not even have enough boots or uniforms for its soldiers. But the Red Army men fought bravely, defending the new, free Russia, and Communists led them into battle.

Arkady Golikov, the country's youngest Communist, wanted to join the Red Army, but he was only fourteen. No one under sixteen could volunteer. But he falsified his age, saying he was sixteen, and volunteered. Arkady was issued a rifle and was assigned to guarding his native town and battling bandit gangs.

At that time Efim Efimov, a Communist in charge of safeguarding the country's railroads, arrived in Arzamas in a General Staff railroad car. He needed an aide, a literate and dependable person who was devoted to the Soviets.

The Communists of Arzamas recommended Arkady Golikov for the job.

Efimov seemed pleased with the tall, sturdy, blue-eyed boy with the good-natured smile. "All right," said the commander. "We'll test you in action. Let's go."

And the train took the young Red Army soldier off to war.

The young aide did not disappoint his commander, for he carried out his duties very well. Arkady drew up reports and orders, and he could type, as he had learned to type in the editorial offices of the local Arzamas newspaper. He would read the latest frontline dispatches to his commander as they came off the ticker tape. The news was very grim. Moscow was encircled by the enemy. Russia was gripped by civil war. The Red Army was very short of troops. That was when Arkady asked to be sent to the front lines.

At first, the commander, who had come to love him as a son, would not agree. He felt that Arkady was too young, but he finally said, "All right. I'll send you to a Red Commanders' school." Efimov wanted Arkady to receive some military training

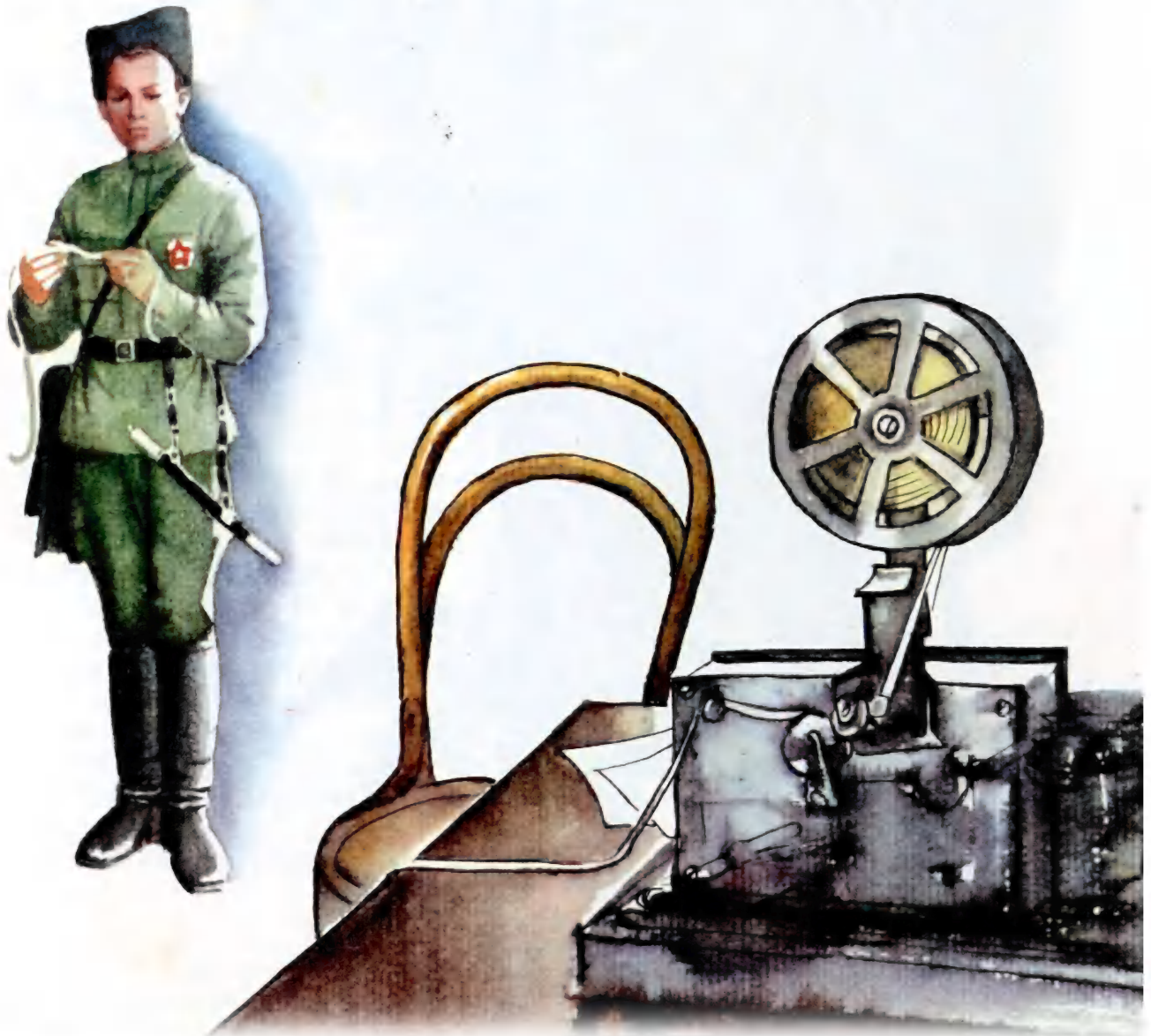


before he was sent into action. The old soldier knew that young hotheads were usually killed in their very first battle.

Efimov told Arkady never to try to show off his bravery, but to conduct every battle in such a way as to defeat the enemy and preserve his own men. That was the real kind of skill needed to win a war.

## THE FIRST BATTLE

Arkady never forgot his very first battle. The young commanders had just graduated from the Red Commanders' School and received their new uniforms and rifles. Now they were marching along and singing:





Bravely we'll fight the foe  
For Soviet Power.  
Prosper and thrive, and grow  
Bright land of ours!

They were on their way to their first battle against the armed Petlyura gangs that were closing in on the city of Kiev. The young commanders felt they'd have no trouble wiping out a bunch of bandits.

They covered 30 kilometres in good time, but were tired by the long march and fell asleep after supper.

Naturally, the young commanders posted sentries, but they did not check on them every few hours during that dark Ukrainian night. The sentries were also young soldiers who had never seen action before. They were tired after the long march and dozed off.

Meanwhile, the bandits were lying in wait in the ravines outside the village where the Red Army unit had stopped for the night.

Suddenly, the bandits attacked. They shouted, whistled, cursed and fired their guns as they attacked the sleeping soldiers. One of the sentries managed to toss a hand grenade. This saved the unit, although all was confusion, as the men were half-asleep. They fought off the bandits, but paid dearly for their victory, as many of Arkady's friends were killed.

Whenever he saw action after that—in Byelorussia, the Caucasus, the Don River steppes, Bashkiria, or the forests of Tambov Region—he never repeated this mistake again and always checked the sentries himself at night.

Arkady took part in many battles. He had horses killed under him, he was buried by earth falling on him after a blast, and was wounded and shell-shocked.

One day he came home on leave, arriving in Arzamas on crutches. He hoped to rest up and get well again.

But this was not to be, for there was fighting going on there, too, against bands of kulaks.<sup>1</sup> His father, Pyotr Golikov, came home on leave, too, but soon left for the front lines again, for he was a divisional commander. As soon as Arkady began to feel better, he returned to his unit. His mother went off to war, too, as she was a doctor's assistant.

The entire Golikov family was fighting for Soviet power.

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<sup>1</sup> Kulak—a rich peasant who was opposed to Soviet power.



## HE'S YOUNG, AND HE'S CLEVER

The Civil War raged on. The Red Army would defeat one foe, only to have others appear.

The kulaks of Tambov Region rose up against the Soviets. Their gang leader's name was Antonov. The kulaks would come riding into a village on their fine horses, ring the church bell and drive all the peasants of the village out of their houses to a general meeting.

"All those who are for the Soviets, one step forward!" they'd say. Then, right by the churchyard fence, they'd mow down the peasants who were for the revolution and Soviet power. After that they would say, as they sat in their saddles above the crowd:

"All those who are for Antonov will get land and freedom. But those that aren't will never live to see a good day."

The bandits would then say that each household was to put up one man to fight against the Soviets. Anyone who didn't want to join them was taken by force. If a man refused to fight on





their side, he was told that his house would be burned down.

The Red Army had to put down the uprising quickly, before the kulaks took over all the stores of grain that the peasants had gathered.

That was when Arkady, who had just recovered from his wounds, was ordered to take command of the 58th Separate Regiment assigned to combat bandits and counter-revolutionaries.

Arkady was an excellent rider and looked like a true commander as he rode off to accept command of the regiment with a sabre on his left hip, a gun on his right and a pair field glasses slung from a strap around his neck. However, when he rode up close and smiled, the men saw that there were dimples in his rosy cheeks, and though he knitted his brows, his eyes were clear and boyish.

"Does this blue-eyed boy with the sweet smile know how to use a sabre or a gun?" the soldiers wondered. "How will a boy like him fight those bloodthirsty bandits?"

It was hard to fight the Antonov gangs. Antonov's main forces had been defeated by the Red Army cavalry under Kotovsky, and by troops sent to Tambov Region from the front lines. Now the remainder of Antonov's forces had split up into small gangs and adopted new tactics. They attacked like wolves, rushing out unexpectedly from the woods or ravines, opening fire from their machine-guns and then retreating into the dark woods, where the Red Army cavalry could not pursue them.

"We won't meet them head-on," Arkady Golikov, the new regimental commander, said. "We'll get them when they're resting and when they don't expect us."

He formed units of night scouts made up of the bravest men and trained them himself.

The night scouts searched for and found the bandit camps deep in the forest. Bandits who were sleeping when they came upon them were taken prisoner. Golikov's scouts set up ambushes and tricked the bandits out of the woods. Soon they had captured many of the gang leaders. Peasants who had been forced into service by threats surrendered, and the Soviets forgave them.

The men of the 58th Separate Regiment admired their youthful commander. "He's young, and he's clever," they said: "He'll never waste ammunition when he can outwit the enemy."

## THE END OF GUMDROP MITYA

This was very true. Arkady was able to capture Gumdrop Mitya, one of the most cunning gang leaders, without firing a single shot. Gumdrop Mitya was a daring robber who always managed to get away. He and his men would rob food warehouses and steal horses that were needed by the Red Army.

One day he and his gang attacked a railroad station. Their shooting scattered the guards. The bandits then broke open one of the freight cars. Inside they found bolts of calico and cotton. They tossed the bolts into their wagons and made off. The Red Army forces set out after them.

As Mitya's gang galloped through a village or settlement, his men would toss some stolen bolts of cloth to the peasants and



shout, "Come and get it! Gumdrop Mitya's generous!"

The Soviet Government was going to trade the cloth for grain, and the bread that would be made of it was to be given to the hungry children in the cities. But here were the bandits, tossing the bolts of cloth right and left.

The thief had to be caught, and quickly.

He nearly was caught once by a Red Army cavalry unit that pursued the gang as far as a village on the edge of a cliff. There was a deep river below the cliff.

Now, surely, Mitya's gang would have to surrender.

A holiday was in full swing in the village. The church bells were ringing, and girls and women dressed in their best were dancing and singing.

The Red Army men galloped straight through the village to the edge of the cliff, yet nowhere could they find a trace of the bandits. Below was the river and the far meadows, but the gang was nowhere to be seen. The Red Army men stood there for a while and then turned their horses back. How surprised they were to see the girls and women mounting the horses that had been grazing nearby and then gallop off, so fast that their skirts ballooned in the wind.

Gumdrop Mitya had ordered his men to put on dresses and kerchiefs, and to join the village women in their singing and dancing.

"We'll catch Mitya," Arkady said to his commissar. "But we'll need a few bearded Red Army men for that."

"If our entire regiment can't catch him, how do you think a few men will, no matter how long their beards are? It'll be a wild goose chase," the commissar said.

But Arkady insisted on his plan. There were seven bearded Red Army men in his regiment, and together they set off for Gumdrop Mitya's native village. His parents had died young, and Mitya had been brought up by his grandmother. After he became a gang leader, he'd often come back home to visit her and to bring her food and other stolen goods. He and his men would dig her garden and mow grass for her cow.

Arkady had learned all about this. One day he and his seven bearded soldiers showed up in Mitya's village. They pretended to be mowers who were looking for work.

The grass was high that year, but there was no one to mow it, because all the village men were in the army.

When Mitya's gang rode out of the woods to mow the grass for his grandmother, they saw some bearded mowers already at



work in the meadow.

Mitya rode up to the last mower in the line and said, "Who're you? Where are you from?"

"We're from over yonder. Who are you? Your horse is trampling the grass. It won't be fit for mowing!"

"I'm Gumdrops Mitya, the leader of a gang!" Mitya bellowed.

"No wonder you've ridden straight through the grass. You've never plowed or sowed in your life. All you've ever done is rob others. I bet you don't even know how to hold a scythe."

"Oh, I don't, don't I?" Mitya said. "Let's have your scythe. I'll show you how it's done." He slid off his horse, unbuckled his holster, took off his sabre, grabbed the bearded man's scythe and began to mow. The cut grass fell in an even row behind him.

Arkady walked up to him and said, "A man who can mow like you can is a fine worker. Good for you, Gumdrops."

"I'm an old hand at this," Mitya said proudly and smiled. "Who are you? Glad to meet you," he added and held out his hand.

"I'm Arkady Golikov, Commander of the 58th Separate Regiment assigned to combat bandits and counter-revolutionaries," Arkady said and shook Mitya's hand.

"You've a strong hand," Mitya mumbled, for he knew that his days of thieving were over.

He was surrounded by seven bearded mowers. Now that he was close up to them, he could see the holsters under their shirts.

"I'll be court-martialled and shot, won't I?" Mitya said.

"You never can tell. You're a brave fellow, and the war isn't over yet," Arkady replied.

"But what about them?" Mitya said and pointed to his men.

"Tell those loafers to dismount and start mowing."

"What about our guns? We've got a lot of ammunition."

"The more you hand over to the Red Army, the less trouble you'll be in."

"All right," Mitya said. He sounded more cheerful now. "You took me prisoner while I was mowing, not in battle. That means I've become a peasant again, so the Soviet Government should pardon me."

"You sure are a sly fox," Arkady said. "You were good at thieving. Now you'll have to take your punishment first."

"I guess you're right," Mitya said.

They rode off together, side by side, Gumdrops Mitya and the Red Army commander who had taken him prisoner.



## STORMING SKY-HIGH TOOTH

Soon Arkady was transferred from Tambov Region to Khakassia, which was far away in Siberia. His assignment was to trap a man named Solovyov, whose nickname was King of the Taiga. He was the leader of a network of bandit gangs.

Solovyov's fortress was on top of a tall mountain known as Sky-High Tooth. From there he could see far and wide. No living creature below could escape being seen from the mountain fortress.

Arkady's unit was very small. They would never be able to trap the bandit gangs Solovyov sent out to steal horses, stores of food and gold from the goldmines nearby. The only possible plan was to surround and capture the leader in his own fortress. This would not be easy.

The young commander put much thought into the plan, as he sat studying his map.

Meanwhile, up on Sky-High Tooth Mountain, Solovyov lay back on a thick bearskin rug, admiring his treasures.

The mountain slopes were covered with tall trees. The King of the Taiga had posted sentries in the treetops and so felt safe inside his fortress.

It was now the middle of a cold autumn. One day Arkady's scouts came back to their camp to say that Solovyov was in the fortress and only had a small guard there, for he had sent his gangs out for new loot.

The fog was so heavy that day you couldn't see your hand before your face. Arkady Golikov led his Red Army men to the





foot of the mountain. The men were dressed lightly, so as to be able to move quickly in battle. They had been ordered to advance as quietly as possible. Their signal to attack would be a shot Arkady fired into the air.

They would all freeze in their tracks when a stone got loose underfoot and rolled down the slope. They would stop and hold their breath when a dry twig snapped. They slithered over boulders like lizards. Still and all, one of the bandit lookouts noticed a suspicious movement: there was no wind, but some bushes below had moved. He fired a shot. If those were Red Army men down below, they would return his fire and reveal their presence.

The Red Army men looked at their commander, but Arkady did not give them the signal to attack. He was leading them higher and higher up the slope.

The fog was beginning to rise. Every now and then one or another of the bandit lookouts would fire down the slope.

"See how jittery they are. If we fire a single shot, they'll know where we are. But we won't," Arkady said and led his men on.

By now Solovyov had come running out of his hiding place and was dashing around, firing into the fog. It seemed to him that what was waving down below was not a sea of trees but countless Red Army men about to capture him.

Every now and then a bandit bullet would hit one of the Red Army men and he would fall down wounded to the ground, but still, the commander did not give the signal to attack. Finally, the fortress on top of the mountain came into view.

All of a sudden the fog lifted, and the bandits opened fire point-blank. At last Arkady fired a shot into the air, sending his men into attack. Machine-guns rattled and hand grenades exploded as they stormed the fortress.

The bandits made a dash for the cliff. In their mad rush to escape many tumbled down to their deaths. Some surrendered. Solovyov, the King of the Taiga, managed to escape, though he had to abandon the treasure his gangs had stolen.

"You have nerves of steel, Commander," Arkady's men said as they gathered up the rifles the bandits had left strewn all over. "Walking straight into the bullets like you did, and smoking your pipe like nothing was happening. You sure have good nerves."

"I have a good pipe," Arkady said and smiled as he held up his pipe and showed them the marks made by his clenched teeth on the pipestem.





## **FAREWELL, GOLIKOV. HELLO, GAIDAR**

The Soviets won the Civil War, and the country was now busy going back to peacetime. Many Red Army men and commanders were returning home to work in the factories and fields.

Arkady decided to devote the rest of his life to serving in the Red Army. The world bourgeoisie would never be happy as long as the Land of Soviets, a free and happy land where they could never rule, existed.

After the Civil War, Arkady decided he would go on to study at a military academy, but the medical commission said he was in need of treatment after being wounded and shell-shocked in battle. However, even good medical care could not make him fit for military service again, and so Arkady Golikov was demobilized with the rank of regimental commander of the Reserves.

He handed in his faithful gun and saber, but kept his commander's map case, for he felt it would still come in handy.

A year passed, and another. Then a broad-shouldered young man who smoked a pipe and had a commander's map case filled with notepads and pencils slung over his shoulder began appearing in factories, at construction sites in the Urals, and in the woodlands of the North. The young man was Arkady Golikov, special correspondent for the "Zvezda", "Uralsky Rabochy" and "Pravda Severa".

His keen eyes and clever smile made it clear that here was a man who had seen much in his day and could easily tell a friend from a foe.

In most of his articles Arkady wrote of all the good that he saw, but in some he made fun of the enemies of the Soviet Land, both abroad and at home, who interfered with the new way of life the country was building.

There was one thing that everyone noticed: no matter where his assignments took him, to a city, a town or a village, Arkady Golikov would always be surrounded by a crowd of boys. They sensed that he had been a real commander and that he could tell them interesting stories about the brave men who had fought for their country's liberty, about men who had fought together



with their own fathers and elder brothers. They envied Arkady, because he had enlisted in the Red Army when he was only fourteen, though that had been in wartime. This, however, was peacetime, and the boys could not enlist. Still, Arkady felt that they should be brought up as future defenders of their country.

His first children's book was about the boys who had fought in the Civil War. It was entitled "R.M.C."

It was so fascinating that the Young Pioneers to whom the writer first read it by the light of a campfire forgot to keep adding wood to the fire, and so it went out. They sat there enchanted, imagining that they, too, were helping the boys of the book rescue a wounded Red Army commander.

Arkady did not stop reading the manuscript to them when the fire went out. But he did not turn a single page in the dark, though, for he knew the book by heart.

There was a lively discussion when the story ended. Now they knew what the three mysterious letters—"R.M.C."—stood for. They stood for the Revolutionary Military Council of the Red Army.

However, when the book was published soon after, they discovered that the author's name on the cover was Arkady Gaidar. That was strange, because he had told them that he had been a regimental commander and that his name was Arkady Golikov. Indeed, how could this be so?

Actually, though, Arkady Gaidar was Arkady Golikov.

There were many ideas about why he had changed his last name and had taken the pen name Gaidar.

This is the most probable of all: Arkady Golikov fought his last battle against the Whiteguards in the mountains of Khakassia, not far from the Mongolian border. It was there that he learned the word *gaidar*. That was what a Mongolian cavalry commander was called. *Gaidar* in Mongolian means "the rider up ahead".

Perhaps the former regimental commander decided to take this pen name when he decided to become a commander of the young army of readers.

This is what he once said: "Perhaps some day it will be said of us that there lived a certain type of people who cleverly called themselves children's writers, while they were actually bringing up a strong, reliable generation."

In time Arkady Gaidar won fame as a children's writer. His second book was entitled "School". It was a story about the Civil



War and a boy who had gone through the difficult school of battles and marches. His young readers read and reread it and discussed it heatedly. They would come to their local libraries and ask for other books by Gaidar. And so he began to write for them, one book after another: "Distant Lands", "May It Ever Shine", "The Fourth Pillbox", "Smoke in the Forest", "A Drummer's Fate".

All these books are about brave girls and boys. No matter what their age, they are all heroes, because they are the children of heroes, the children of the heroic Land of Soviets.

The situation in the world was becoming very troubled. In Italy and Germany the fascists, who hated peace and freedom, came to power. They began conquering the nations of Europe, one after another. This was the beginning of the Second World War. Fascist tanks and planes attacked the countries bordering on the Soviet Union. The fires of war were now burning along the Soviet borders.

In the years before war came to the Soviet Union, Gaidar wrote his most famous book.

The idea for the book came to him one day as he was watching some children playing. And he said to himself: "Why do they play games of robbers?" He decided to suggest a new kind of game to them, a game about good people.

That is when he wrote "Timur and His Squad". It is the story of a boy named Timur who gets a group of very ordinary boys and girls together, and they begin doing good deeds. In secret they help those who are in need of help. They look after the families of Red Army men and fight bullies.

The young readers loved this book. At first, some of them began playing a new game called "Timur and His Squad". Then the Young Pioneers of the country began playing it in earnest, and a new movement was born in the country. It was called the Timur Movement.

Millions of children in the Soviet Union and, later, in other countries as well, followed the example of Timur and his friends. They are now helping their mothers and fathers to build a new and happy life under the red star.

In the years before the war, Gaidar wrote a story for very young children. It was a story about the brave Malchish-Kibalchish who would not reveal the military secret of why the Red Army was strong and invincible.

All the children of the Land of Soviets admired Malchish-Kibalchish.



The former regimental commander's dream had come true. He had truly become the commander of a great army of young readers, "the rider up ahead".

## **A TEST OF COURAGE**

Gaidar respected every child, no matter how young he was, because he felt that every child had a right to be respected. He believed that children were quite capable of performing noble and courageous deeds, and that they could be their elders' brave and trusted friends.

One day Arkady Gaidar decided to test his son Timur's courage, even though the boy was still very small.

When Timur grew up, this is what he said about that day:

"We had been out for a walk and were returning home in the dark. That is why the little grove seemed like a dense forest. All of a sudden my father sang out in a very sad voice:

'We're lost in the woods,  
And we're all alone.'

"I became really scared and gripped his hand.

"'Why, Timur, you look frightened,' he said.

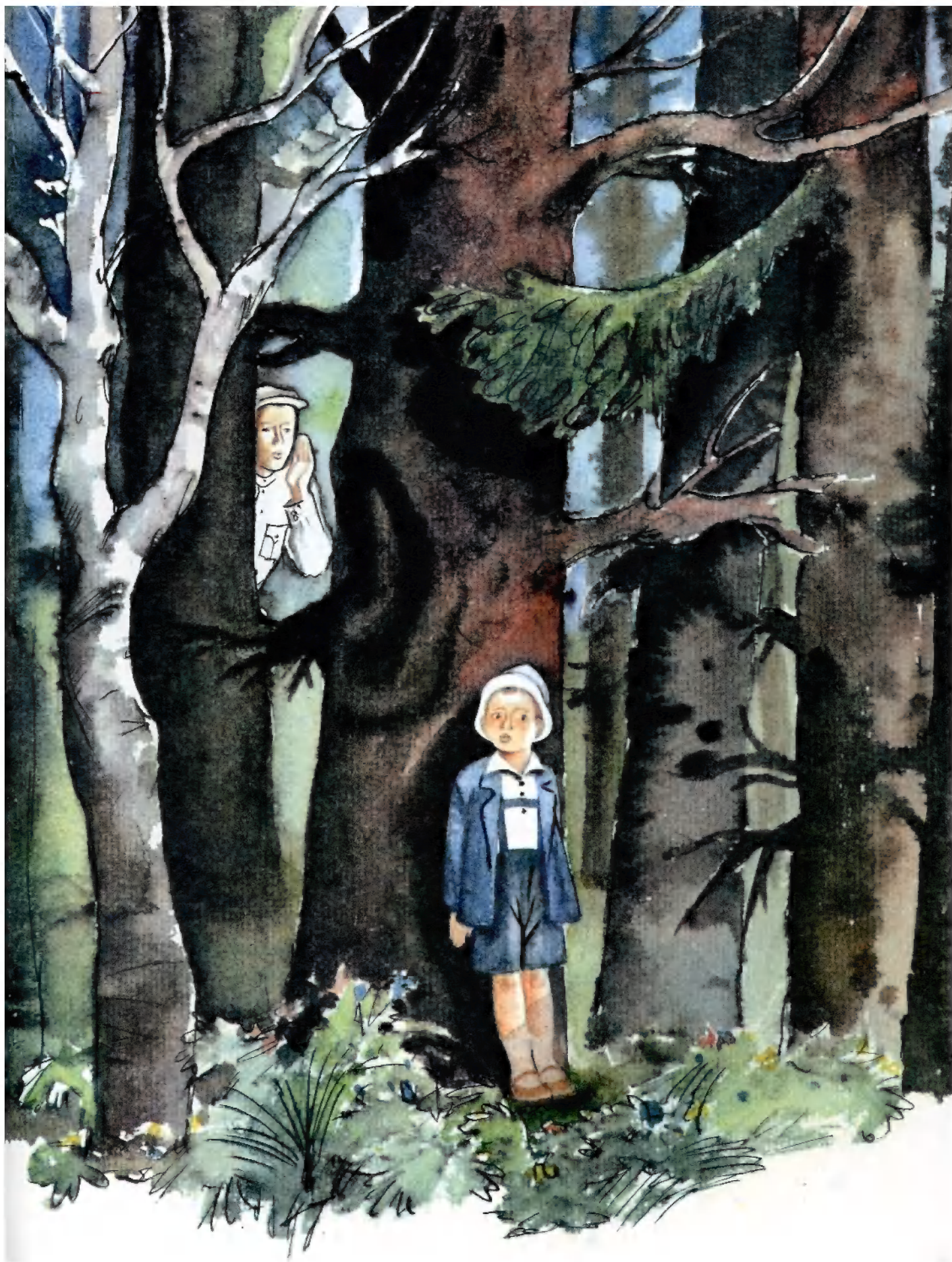
"'No, I'm not. Just a teeny bit.'

"'Well, since you're not afraid, stay here and wait for me, but don't look back.'

"I was very scared, but I didn't want him to think I was a coward. Everything was pitch black by now. I heard a frog croaking. Then a twig snapped in the bushes nearby. Still, I stood there.

"The cracking and crunching in the bushes was getting louder and louder, but I couldn't turn around, and I couldn't run away, because then my father would think I was a coward and would not respect me any more. He hated cowards.

"Finally, the cracking and crunching stopped. I could feel my father's hands lifting me up and setting me on his shoulder. It was he who had been making all the noise, to test my courage."



Then they walked on together again, and Arkady Gaidar sang a little song he had just made up as they marched along.

It is late at night and dark  
As we walk across the park.  
Look, the moon is out tonight.  
Moonbeams make the toads seem bright.  
We can hear a growling bear,  
But Timur will never fear.  
We're together, yes, we are,  
And we both are named Gaidar!

### **THE COMMANDER'S LAST ORDER**

Arkady Gaidar always called on the children and adults of his country to love their great Soviet Land and, if necessary, to sacrifice their lives for it.

When the fascist hordes attacked the Soviet Union, Gaidar volunteered for service in the army. He wrote an appeal to the Young Pioneers. It was printed in the newspapers, and it reads like a commander's order:

**"Children! Young Pioneers! Brave followers of Timur! Surround the families of soldiers who are fighting at the front lines  
"Put all idlers and hooligans to shame.  
"Be fleet as an arrow as you hurry to warn your elders of the appearance of enemy saboteurs, scouts or paratroopers.**

**"If you encounter enemy troops, be silent, or deceive them by pointing out the wrong roads for them to follow.**

**"Watch passing enemy units. Note which way they go and how they are armed.**

**"Your country has cared for you. It educated you, brought you up, cherished you, and often even pampered you. Now the time has come for you to prove that you care for it and love it, too.**

**"Do not believe a word of what whisperers, cowards and panic-stricken people say. No matter what, there never was and never will be a force that is able to destroy the power and might of our brave people.**

**"Victory will be ours!"**



## GAIDAR'S FIERY TRAIL

Meanwhile, Gaidar was on his way to the front lines. He had taken along his favorite pipe and commander's map case. He was going to the front, to the city of Kiev, as a military correspondent for "Komsomolskaya Pravda".

His dispatches about the heroes of the Great Patriotic War were eagerly awaited in the editorial offices in Moscow. But there were no dispatches from him.

When his office phoned the division, they were told that Gaidar was with a regiment that was engaged in battle. When they phoned the regiment, they were told he was with a battalion. When they finally reached the battalion command post, someone there shouted into the receiver:

"I can't hear you! There are mines exploding here! We've no time to search for your correspondent. The nazis are advancing! Fire!"





And the line was disconnected.

However, Gaidar's trail was not lost. He was not a man to give up his life without a struggle.

When the nazis attacked the battalion command post, Gaidar took part in the fighting. The battle raged all through the night.

It was difficult to recognize Gaidar the next morning. The day before he had been neat and trim, and smiling, as always. Now he wore a steel helmet instead of his officer's cap and carried a submachine-gun he had captured in battle. His hands were bruised, and his clothes and boots were mudspattered. His face was stern.

Gaidar went on reconnaissance missions. Together with the men of the battalion he guarded a railroad bridge. He helped the gunners shoot down nazi planes. He took part in ferrying the wounded across a river under enemy fire.

Arkady Gaidar notched his trail across the scorched land with the frontline dispatches he sent to "Komsomolskaya Pravda".

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#### AT THE CROSSING

*"Our battalion was entering a village. The air was full of dust raised by the marching columns. The sand was pitted by explosions. To all sides were the ashes of village houses razed by the Germans.*

*"The German battery was taken unawares. It opened fire on the advance unit from the hill. Incendiary shells whizzed by with a loud, hissing noise, leaving fiery streaks in their wake."*

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Timur's young followers throughout the country read Gaidar's dispatches. Each one ended with the words: "The army in the field". It did not tell them where he was. They knew that he had been sent to the South-Western Front, somewhere in the region of Kiev, and that the crossing he had written about was also somewhere in the Ukraine. The name of the river was a military secret.

That meant it was no use trying to guess. He was in action,

and that was what counted. It meant he was well, and that he would write more books for them in the days to come.

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### THE BRIDGE

*"The railroad bridge was as straight and narrow as a bayonet. High up on the bridge, somewhere between the water and the sky, our guards are posted at intervals of 20 to 30 meters.*

*"... Glory to the bold, courageous sentries of all the military roads of our great Soviet Land: to those who are posted in dense forests, to those who are posted high on the mountaintops, to those who are posted in the towns, villages and cities, at crossings, corners and gates. Yet, the greatest honor belongs to the sentry posted on a bridge across which trains laden with cartridges and shells rumble by, and across which dusty, valliant troops march into battle. This sentry stands on a long, narrow strip of iron. Overhead is the vast sky, filled with the roaring of death-bearing planes...*

*"Two steps to the right, two steps to the left. This is all the space the sentry has to move in.*

*"... Nazi fighter planes whine loudly. Groups of bombers thunder above as they zero in on the bridge..."*

---

When Gaidar's son Timur read these lines, he recalled the time he had stood at his post in the dark forest like a sentry, never moving, though he had been frightened. He had been unarmed, but the sentries on the bridge had rifles, and they would be able to defend themselves, and their people, and their country.

Arkady Gaidar kept sending ever new dispatches to his newspaper. These were the captions of some of them:

*"CHILDREN AND THE WAR"*

*"AT THE FRONT LINES"*

*"ROCKETS AND HAND GRENADES"*



Not everyone who read these dispatches knew that just before writing them Gaidar had been firing at dive-bombers and had taken part in an attack. He felt he could not write of the bravery of the soldiers if he himself did not take part in the battles.

### **A SOLDIER'S BRAVE DEED**

Gaidar's battalion was preparing to launch an attack at night. Their orders were to liberate a village the enemy had occupied. There was no other way out, for by occupying this village, the



nazis had cut off the last road leading eastward from Kiev to the main Soviet forces.

Arkady Gaidar, the "Komsomolskaya Pravda" correspondent, took part in this battle side-by-side with the soldiers of the battalion.

They advanced into a hailstorm of direct fire, and many of the men were killed. But the village was liberated.

When they received their orders to proceed to another position, the men ran across a plowed field in short spurts, heading towards the woods in the distance.

The battalion commissar was the last to go, for he had stayed behind to make sure no one was wounded and that all the men had crossed the field safely. Suddenly, a mine exploded nearby.

The soldiers were used to carrying out their commander's orders quickly and precisely. By the time the mine exploded, they were near the woods and out of range of the enemy's fire, so that no one saw the commander fall.

A group of nazis were now hurrying towards him. Then, all of a sudden, a Soviet soldier appeared. He hoisted the unconscious commander onto his shoulders and headed across the field. At every step he took his feet sank into the soft earth. The enemy's bullets whizzed by his head. They seemed to be saying: "We'll get you! We'll get you!"

Still, the soldier trudged on, carrying his commander to safety.

The commissar regained consciousness at the edge of the wood and once again took command of his battalion. Once again the brave men battled fearlessly. They told each other of the unknown soldier who had snatched their commander out of the enemy's jaws and carried him across the plowed field under fire.

It was not until after the war that we learned the unknown soldier's name. It was Arkady Gaidar.

## **THE LIFE OF THE PARTISAN UNIT**

The roads of war brought Arkady Gaidar to the partisans.

The men in the partisan unit were all civilians who had no military experience, but as Gaidar had seen quite a bit of action

in that area during the Civil War, he would be of great help to the unit.

"These are hard times," he said to the young boys who had just taken up arms, "but there is no force in the world that can overcome us Russians. Down through the centuries many armies tried to conquer our country, but they were all defeated.



"The main thing is not to give our enemies a chance to catch their breath. We must attack suddenly and catch them unawares. We must give the nazis no peace, day or night.

"There are not many of us here, but there are many of them. No matter, though, for we are defending our own land, and even the dark night is our friend. But even the bright day is their enemy. Very soon, whenever they hear the word 'partisan', they'll become terror-stricken.

"Now here's an example. Say, a German motorcyclist is coming down a deserted road. All of a sudden, as if by magic, he's thrown from his seat. Not a shot has been fired. There has been no explosion. What did the trick was a thin piece of wire strung across the road.

"Now imagine a nazi colonel is being driven to headquarters in his car. His escort up ahead consists of an armored car and a detachment of soldiers. They have just passed a crossing at which there are two signs. One is an arrow pointing to their HQ, and the other is a poster warning them to beware of partisans.

"The partisans lying in ambush let the armored car by and then quickly change the road signs, putting the poster where the arrow was and the arrow where the poster was. The nazi colonel's driver follows the arrow to what he thinks is German HQ and turns off onto a side road, driving the colonel straight into the partisan ambush."

Gaidar participated in many such partisan forays. In the breaks between battles he would make himself comfortable on a tree stump and begin writing. Then he would fold the pages and slip them into his map case.

"What're you writing about?" the partisans would say.

"About our life here in the forest, and of how we're driving the nazi scum out of our land." He would say no more, because he did not like to read anything that he felt was not ready to be printed.

The people's avengers fought bravely. They attacked swiftly, and the enemy could not trap them.

But then a terrible day dawned. One of the men turned traitor and led the nazis to the partisan camp. He betrayed his comrades, the partisans. He betrayed his country.

A terrible battle followed. The partisans were forced towards a swamp, but they managed to break free. Gaidar covered their retreat. He was the last to leave. The partisans broke up into groups of three and four and headed for different locations.



Before Gaidar joined them, he gave the manuscript of the book he was writing to the local forester, a man named Shvaiko, for safekeeping.

The forester found a good hiding place for Gaidar's map case, but before he had chance to tell anyone where it was, the nazis shot him for being a friend of the partisans. To this day the map case and the manuscript have never been found.

Gaidar led the partisans along a secret path from the small wood into a great forest, for he had fought here long before and knew the area well.

When they were not far from the railroad embankment, he decided to go on ahead and make sure that all was clear. Besides, he knew the local trackman.

The morning of October 26, 1941 was cold and misty. Gaidar walked on, peering to the right and left. His fair hair and broad shoulders could be seen above the rolling mist. He walked on until the familiar path brought him to the railroad embankment. Then he spotted the nazis, even though their gray uniforms blended in with the gray day, for Gaidar had the keen, experienced eyes of a scout.

"There are nazis here!" he shouted to his comrades, and was about to toss a hand grenade and escape as it exploded, but at that very moment the nazis opened fire on him from all sides.

## **GAIDAR LEADS THE WAY**

The partisans whose lives Gaidar had saved by warning them of an enemy ambush made note of the spot where he had been killed.

After the war a group of Ukrainian Young Pioneers gathered some earth that had once been reddened by Gaidar's blood and brought it to Moscow, where it was spread at the foot of the statue of Malchish-Kibalchish.

The bronze boy in the pointed Red Army cap with the raised sabre, Gaidar's favorite personage, will always stand guard over this earth.

This statue is more than a monument to a boy in a book.

It stands on Lenin Hills, at the entrance to the Palace of Young Pioneers, as a symbol of the country's eternal gratitude

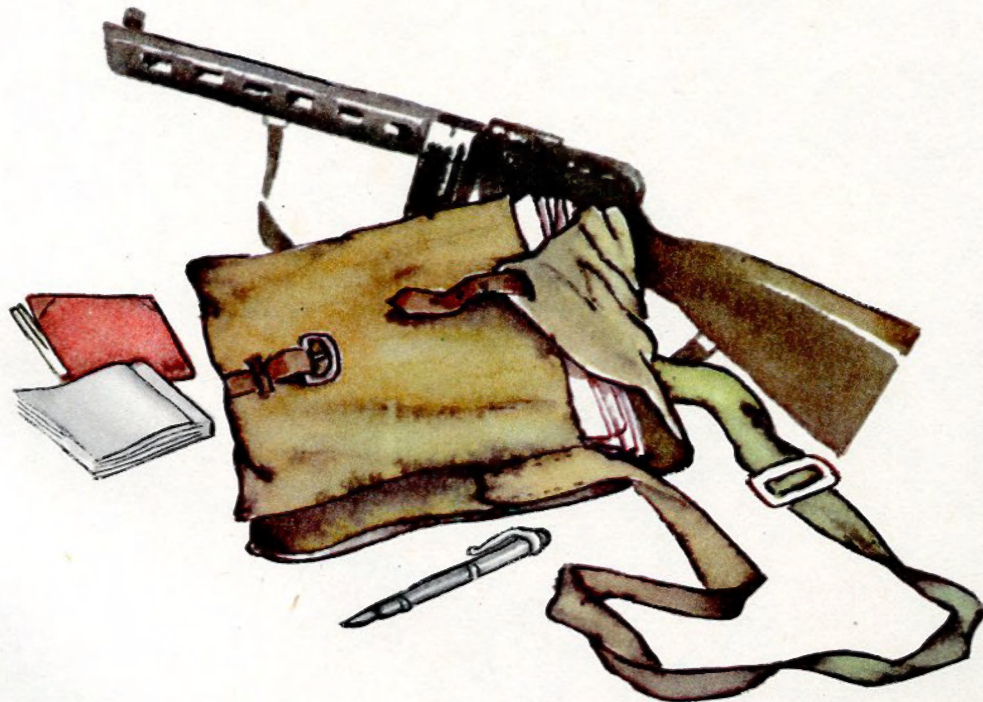
to all the boys and girls of the Soviet Union who lost their lives defending their country.

Each year on October 26th, the anniversary of Gaidar's death, Young Pioneers gather at the statue to commemorate Arkady Gaidar's last feat.

Arkady Gaidar once dreamed of remaining in the ranks of the Red Army all his life, so that he could protect the freedom and happiness of his people.

He taught the children of the Soviet Union to love and to cherish their country above all, and to sacrifice their lives for it, if necessary. He sacrificed his life for it.

The nazis killed Gaidar, the partisan machine-gunner, but Gaidar the writer lives on!



Arkady Gaidar's books have crossed the mountains and seas to all countries of the world, telling people the truth about the Soviet Union, about its fine deeds and brave people.

Drums beat—  
Long live Gaidar!  
Trumpets blare—  
Long live Gaidar!







Nikolai Bogdanov

THE RIDER UP AHEAD

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